

Portfolio #3 - Methods in History

# The Real Pocahontas Please Stand Up

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## Rationale

In order to promote examination and further understanding of the rich cultures and lifestyles of the First Nations people of this continent, we as teachers must assist our students in dispelling myths and stereotypes that are largely disseminated by pop culture and the media. Accounts and portrayals of European encounters with Native people tend to be glorified and romanticized in some cases, such as the Disney depictions. Others, such as the Neil Young song “Pocahontas”, tend to highlight the massacres and injustices that took place, the continuing plight of present-day Native people, and the nostalgic and unrealistic sense of returning to a previous time period. These prevalent and non-Native viewpoints tend to shape contemporary ideas of Native culture and history, which can lead to great misunderstanding and the perpetuation of such myths and stereotypes. Students must be taught to critically examine multiple sources and perspectives in order to interpret them and thus distinguish factual information from opinion and biased perception.

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## NB Curriculum Objectives

This activity would be done before beginning Section Six in the Native Studies 120 curriculum or Although Pocahontas is an American figure, she is extremely well known and this will be an intensifier to begin discussions that will ultimately emanate from a Canadian perspective.

**Native Studies 120** - the following are areas that can be tied into the curriculum even though the subject is American.

1. British colonial officials, and later the government of Canada, treated the regional branches of the Micmac people as separate, politically independent groups.
2. In a number of stages, colonial officials replaced the traditional government of Micmac communities with a European system.
3. Chiefs were appointed and maintained in office by commissions from the colonial government, who controlled First Nation politics in this way.
4. The NB government legalized the sale of land on Indian reserves in an act of 1844.

OR

## Canadian History 122: Section 1: Immigration and Imperialism

Outcome 1: Students will demonstrate their understanding of the factors which contributed to the immigration into Canada and its subsequent impact.

Graduates will be able to:

- examine human rights issues and recognize forms of discrimination.
- demonstrate understanding of their own and others' cultural heritage, cultural identity and the contribution of multiculturalism to society.
- demonstrate understanding of the ideas, perceptions and feelings of others as expressed in various art forms.
- use various art forms as a means of formulating and expressing ideas, perceptions and feelings.
- critically reflect on and interpret ideas presented through a variety of media.
- acquire, process and interpret information critically to make informed decisions.
- formulate tentative ideas, and question their own assumptions and those of others.
- identify, describe and interpret different points of view and distinguish fact from opinion.

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## Materials

The Following is a list of documents/films/lyrics necessary for this lesson plan:

- NB curriculum document - Native Studies 120 - Section Six - Colonial Relations
- The Pocahontas Archive - Introduction - from [digitallib.lehigh.edu/trial/pocahontas/](http://digitallib.lehigh.edu/trial/pocahontas/)
- The Pocahontas Archive - five images - from [digital.lib.lehigh.edu/trial/pocahontas/images](http://digital.lib.lehigh.edu/trial/pocahontas/images)
- Bichan, Kyle. "Neil Young's Use of North American History" - from [hyperrust.org/Words/NeilUsesHistory.html](http://hyperrust.org/Words/NeilUsesHistory.html)
- Dyer, Gary. "The Transatlantic Pocahontas"
- Gallagher, Edward J. "The Assimilated Pocahontas: Simon van de Passse's "Matoaka als Rebecca" - from [digital.lib.lehigh.edu/trial/pocahontas/essays](http://digital.lib.lehigh.edu/trial/pocahontas/essays)
- Golden, Margaret. "Pocahontas: Comparing the Disney Image with Historical Evidence" - from [socialstudies.org](http://socialstudies.org)
- Kidwell, Clara Sue. "Indian Women as Cultural Mediators" Ethnohistory University of California, Berkeley
- Ono, Kent A. "Deciphering Pocahontas: Unpackaging the commodification of a native American woman". Critical Studies in Media Communication 18:1 (2001) 23-43
- Reutiman, Joe. "The Forgotten Kidnapping: The Transformation of the Pocahontas Captivity Story" - from [digital.lib.lehigh.edu/trial/pocahontas/essays](http://digital.lib.lehigh.edu/trial/pocahontas/essays)
- Young, Neil - Lyrics from 'Pocahontas' - 1979

- You Tube Clip of Marlon Brando Oscar win - from <http://youtube.com/watch?v=2QUacUoI4yU>

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## Activity

1. Students will begin by doing a comparison of five images of Pocahontas. Split the class into 4 - 5 groups and give each group two images. Ensure that there is a variety of pairings of the provided images. Each group will hand in their comparisons of the pictures using whatever prior knowledge they may have. You will not look at these until the students have completed the 'evidence activity' and you can make them aware of this. They can place them in envelopes that they can seal just to be sure.
2. Students will now choose one of three options:
  - **Disney Movie**
    - Watch the selected movie clips. Using evidence, provided by the teacher, you will compare the movie clips with the evidence they have uncovered. They can use p85 in Denos & Case 'Document Analysis' form to help guide their research.
  - **Hollywood Movie**
    - Students will watch selected clips from 'The New World' (2005). Using evidence, provided by the teacher, you will compare the movie clips with the evidence they have uncovered. They can also use D&C p85.
  - **Music Hour**
    - Listen to Neil Young's song 'Pocahontas'. Discuss the lyrics within your group. Identify significance to Pocahontas and the lyrics.
    - Watch the youtube clip of Sacheen Littlefeather refusing the Best Actor Nod at The Oscars on Marlon Brando's behalf 1973
    - Using Kyle Bichan's essay: "Neil Young's Use of North American History", (and other evidence) you will come up with your own reasons why Neil Young would write this song and what he might have meant.

\*Once the students have completed one of the three sections they will present them in class by either oral report /written report to hand out or multimedia presentation.

\*Now have the students look at their images of Pocahontas and write down new observations from what they have learned.

\*Take the original observations and place them side by side (on overhead, do each group separately) and discuss the differences. There might be some surprises!

**"Pocahontas" -Neil Young**

Aurora borealis  
The icy sky at night  
Paddles cut the water  
In a long and hurried flight  
From the white man  
to the fields of green  
And the homeland  
we've never seen.

They killed us in our tepee  
And they cut our women down  
They might have left some babies  
Cryin' on the ground  
But the firesticks  
and the wagons come  
And the night falls  
on the setting sun.

They massacred the buffalo  
Kitty corner from the bank  
The taxis run across my feet  
And my eyes have turned to blanks  
In my little box  
at the top of the stairs  
With my Indian rug  
and a pipe to share.

I wish I was a trapper  
I would give thousand pelts  
To sleep with Pocahontas  
And find out how she felt  
In the mornin'  
on the fields of green  
In the homeland  
we've never seen.

And maybe Marlon Brando  
Will be there by the fire  
We'll sit and talk of Hollywood  
And the good things there for hire  
And the Astrodome  
and the first tepee  
Marlon Brando, Pocahontas and me  
Marlon Brando, Pocahontas and me  
Pocahontas.

**Disney's Pocahontas Clips:****Blue is for sections for this Lesson Plan**

(Times are approximate)

5:00 - we'll kill ourselves an indian

6:00 - first view of 'savages'  
- how are they depicted?

**7:35 - You know Pocahontas has her Mother's spirit**

- this is the first time we see her  
- what are your first impressions?

- is there anything that talks about Kokoum?

**15:00 - Grandmother Willow**

- spinning arrow, spirits all around

18:20 - we will give them a proper English welcome

23:52 - British Flag - Claiming Jamestown

24:25 - start digging - remember what the Spanish Found

32:03 - the way she plays with her hair in this scene, she starts speaking English magically

**37:20 - our houses are fine - John Smith has improved the lives of savages. *Colors of the Wind* song**

**42:23 - you see them fall in love??**

44:25 - Why do you think they don't want us here? We took their land, invaded and shot them

48:30 - John Smith meets grandmother willow  
- would she have involved him in this part of her life like this?  
- wouldn't she be more sacred?

52:50 - John Smith tells them they don't need to attack  
- Radcliffe doesn't agree - who is he?

**56:00 - John Smith tells Pocahontas they are going to attack**

**1:00:00 - you have shamed your father**

**1:01 - goes to see JS in teepee where he is being held**

1:03:00 - putting tribal paint

1:07:00 - if you kill him you will have to kill me too

1:11:00 - goes to say good-bye she brings supplies, tells him he will always be welcome. JS asks her to go with him.